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The Differences in Self-Esteem, Family Functioning, Parenting Styles, and Conscientiousness Between Hmong and Caucasian Individuals

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The United States continues to serve as the center of multiculturalism as recent immigrants and refugees from around the world bring their cultures, languages, and racial-ethnic identities to their new home. Especially interesting is the contrast offered by Eastern culture, whose collectivistic values set them apart from the individualistic ideals of Western culture. There are important distinctions among every culture that influence the way that its members are raised, the manner in which they communicate within and outside of their communities, their self-perceptions, and their values and beliefs. The current study focuses on the differences found between the Hmong population in comparison to the experiences of Caucasians.

Hmong migration to the U.S. from Southeast Asia began in the 1970's in response to the Vietnam War (Meredith & Rowe, 1986). The Hmong had fled to Laos beginning in the 1800's in response to persecution from the Chinese, but their persecution continued in their new home due to their cultural differences from the lowland Lao, Laos' largest ethnic group (Pfaff, 1995). The United States recruited the Hmong to become their allies during the Vietnam War in an effort to slow the growth of communism. After the war, the Hmong experienced renewed persecutions due to both their ethnic differences and their involvement with the United States. Many fled again to refugee camps in Thailand, which proved to be journeys filled with pain and suffering. From there a large population of Hmong individuals came to the United States (Secrist, 2007). Most have settled in California and the upper Midwestern states (Xiong & Tatum, 1999). As of 2010, there were 66,181 Hmong individuals residing in Minnesota, the state with the second largest Hmong population in the United States (Kao, 2012).

Immigrant and refugee parents tend to retain the values and practices of the country they came from and were raised in, whereas immigrant children are able to acculturate at a much more rapid pace by learning the language, forming friendships with the other children of their new country, etc. (Birman, 2006). The greater the difference is between these rates of acculturation, the more conflict there appears to be between the parent and child as they come to differ in their values and experiences (Ahn, Kim, & Park, 2008). This conflict differs from everyday conflict between parents and their children because there are unique concerns and resentments involved, such as the parent fearing that their child will assimilate too much into the new culture and reject the traditions of their family culture (Kibria, 1990).

Hmong American families in particular are experiencing these internal conflicts, as recent immigrants and refugees who have faced the challenges associated with refugee resettlement. These families are more likely than other Asian American families to hold fast to their cultural traditions, yet Hmong American children are also found to be less reliant upon their parents and to be more challenging of their parents' authority, leading to Hmong parents reclaiming their power and control in a way that their children might feel is overbearing (Rumbaut & Ima, 1988; Supple & Small, 2007; Xiong, Detzner, & Cleveland, 2004-2005). This may cause the children to rebel against their parents or feel hopeless about the relationship between them (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Furthermore, the Hmong parents and children are both attempting to assimilate to a new culture, which can also create a stressful family environment through the frustration of trying to reconcile their attempts at fitting in with their family values (Bahrassa, Juan, & Lee, 2013).

Research suggests that Hmong American parents tend to be more authoritarian in that they emphasize demands and control, and less frequently show direct warmth and love towards

their children. Hmong American parents experience more acculturative stress as immigrants and refugees (something Caucasian-Americans do not have to deal with in general) and are more resistant in allowing their children to become "Americanized." They instead focus on the importance of respecting one's elders and dedicating oneself to familial responsibilities (Supple & Cavanaugh, 2013). This may increase their authoritarian parenting characteristics, such as restrictiveness, in an effort to maintain their culture (Bahrassa et al., 2013).

It is important to note that the experiences of Hmong sons and daughters differ due to Hmong family values that give daughters more household responsibilities in an effort to raise them to be a good wife, whereas sons are given more freedom and are considered leaders, thus allowing them to have more of a voice in their family than their female siblings (Moua & Lamborn, 2010; Yang, 1997). When a parent is said to be transferring responsibility onto their child, they allow the child to complete a task under their guidance, then provide gradually less guidance in the future (Rogoff, 1990). Caucasian parents may engage in this transference by being less directive than Hmong parents, since their Western culture more strongly favors autonomy, and Hmong culture is more collectivistic, coming from an Eastern mind-set (Grolnick, Gurland, DeCourcey, & Jacob, 2002).

The denial of autonomy brought about by the controlling behavior of the parent may negatively impact the self-esteem of their children. However, Hmong parents consider it more efficient just to tell their child what to do directly. This is to be expected in a culture from simple, agrarian origins, where the parents expect major familial contributions from their children in terms of household chores – giving their children commands and telling them what to do outright helps to get the job done more quickly (Childs & Greenfield, 1980). Parents who

believe in the importance of conscientiousness, in contrast to the Western Caucasian perspective, are more directive with their children and stress obedience (Kochanska, 1990).

Western Caucasians tend to believe that the self-esteem of a child, or any person, for that matter, is essential to their overall psychological health and well-being (Miller, Wang, Sandel, & Cho, 2002). A study of young adults by Hamon and Schrodt (2012) revealed that there is a negative correlation between family conformity and the self-esteem of the children, and a positive correlation between the authoritativeness of the parents and the self-esteem of their children. In other words, an authoritative parenting-style seems to increase self-esteem in the children, whereas family conformity decreases it (Hamon & Schrodt, 2012). Additionally, Caucasian American families value the expression of emotion as the unique expression of oneself (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Being in touch with ones feelings is exalted as a sign of psychological awareness, intelligence, and health. Therefore, the discussion of emotions is encouraged in Western society (Reis, Smith, Carmichael, Caprariello, Tsai, Rodrigues, & Maniaci, 2010).

Eastern families tend to value conformity due to their emphasis on harmony, while Western parenting is associated with authoritative parenting, since they value give-and-take with their children. Caucasian parents are more likely to offer warm praise in response to the efforts of their children (Miller, Wang, Sandel, & Cho, 2002). Conversely, the traditional Hmong belief is that praise will only bring a child bad luck and do harm to their spirit (Chen et al., 1998; Fadiman, 1997). However, praise may be more common among less traditional Hmong families with more education (Stright, Herr, & Neitzel, 2009).

Western and Eastern cultures generally promote differing construals of the self, leaning towards independent and interdependent views of the self respectively. The Western,

independent perspective claims that we are all distinct, unique individuals made up of internal characteristics. In such societies, the goal is to be yourself, discover and express your own identity, and obtain complete autonomy (Johnson, 1985). When those with an independent self-contsrual are in social situations, others are there to affirm the person's own identity rather than helping to form that person's identity (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). From the interdependent perspective, on the other hand, people are all connected to each other, and it is these connections that make up who we are rather than our internal attributes (Kondo, 1982; Sampson, 1988). They are made up of their relationships with others and their behavior reflects those of their group. Westerners see self-actualization as the peak of personal development, whereas Easterners see that they are the best versions of themselves only in the context of those around them (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Lebra, 1976). Opinions and character traits are situation specific, dependent upon others, flexible, and inconstant (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

The basis of self-esteem for those with the independent perspective include self-expression and validation, whereas those of the interdependent perspective have their self-esteem based on the maintenance of harmony with others and self-restraint. Self-esteem thus comes from different sources for those from Western and Eastern cultures. However, according to attribution theory, Westerners may engage more in the false uniqueness bias and consider themselves special and uniquely talented when they are not, whereas Easterners may engage in more self-effacing biases and underestimate themselves. In other words, Westerns leans towards a self-serving bias, whereas Easterners tend to have more of a modesty bias (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Although their self-esteem comes from different sources, these biases may result in differing levels of self-esteem between Caucasian and Hmong populations.

Based on this research, the current study hopes to reveal the relationships between self-esteem, conscientiousness, parenting style, and family functioning among the Hmong-American and Caucasian-American populations. The intersection of Western or Eastern parenting styles with a collectivistic or individualistic orientation may be expressed within these groups to reveal their unique experiences and values.

In terms of personality, Caucasians appear to value autonomy, whereas Hmong deny it. Due to their more directive parenting approach and emphasis on familial responsibility, the Hmong may have higher levels of conscientiousness than Caucasians, who are nondirective. Looking at family life, Caucasians appear to have less familial stress due to their open communication and native-citizenship, whereas the Hmong are struggling with their refugee status and differing acculturation rates between family members. Immigration has further led the Hmong population to hold tightly onto their traditions and way of life, causing the parents to be more authoritarian than they might be otherwise. On the other hand, Caucasian families tend to be authoritative. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Caucasian participants will have higher self-esteem scores than the Hmong participants.

Hypothesis 2: Hmong participants will have higher conscientiousness scores than Caucasian participants.

Hypothesis 3: Hmong participants will have higher familial general functioning stress scores than Caucasian participants.

Hypothesis 4: Hmong participants will have higher familial roles stress scores than Caucasian participants.

Hypothesis 5: Hmong participants will perceive their parents to be more authoritarian than Caucasians.

Method

Participants

A convenience sample of undergraduate college students from two small, private, Midwestern, Catholic, liberal arts colleges participated in an online survey. The total sample (*N* = 87) consisted of people ranging from ages 18-23, with the average age being 19 (*M* = 19.26). Participants consisted of men (*N* = 6) and women (*N* = 81). Regarding race/ethnicity of the participants, the sample consisted of 51.7% Caucasian (*N* = 45) and 48.3% Hmong (*N* = 42). Of the men, half identified as Hmong (*N* = 3) and half as Caucasian (*N* = 3). There was a wide range represented in terms of socioeconomic status, with 5.4% of participants coming from very low income backgrounds (*N* = 5), 17.2% low income (*N* = 16), 18.3% low middle (*N* = 17), 33.3% middle (*N* = 31), 21.5% high middle (*N* = 20), and 4.3% high income backgrounds (*N* = 4).

Participants were recruited through Introduction to Psychology courses, a Hmong-related club, the International Student Office, and through campus advertisement. The majority of Caucasian participants were young, with 44.4% age 18 (*N* = 20), 40.4% age 19 (*N* = 18), 11.1% age 20 (*N* = 5), and 4.4% age 21 (*N* = 2), indicating that many of them were in their first or second year of college. There was a wider range of ages among Hmong participants, with 24.4% age 18 (*N* = 10), 26.8% age 19 (*N* = 11), 12.2% age 20 (*N* = 5), 34.1% age 21 (*N* = 14), and 2.4% age 23 (*N* = 1). Caucasian participants tended to have fewer siblings, with 2.2% having no siblings (*N* = 1), 31.1% having only one (*N* = 14), 35.6% with two (*N* = 16), 15.6% with three (*N* = 7), 6.7% with four (*N* = 3), 2.2% with five (*N* = 1), 2.2% with six (*N* = 1), 2.2% with seven (*N*

= 1), 2.2% with eight (*N* = 1), and 2.2% with nine (*N* = 1). Hmong participants had a wide range in their amount of siblings, with none being only children, 2.4% having only one sibling (*N* = 1), 2.4% with two (*N* = 1), 12.2% with three (*N* = 5), 17.1% with four (*N* = 4), 12.2% with five (*N* = 5), 9.8% with six (*N* = 4), 17.1% with seven (*N* = 7), 9.8% with eight (*N* = 4), 12.2% with nine (*N* = 5), and 2.4% with ten (*N* = 1).

Materials

Several surveys were utilized, including the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the Family Assessment Device, the Parental Authority Questionnaire (short version), the International Personality Item Pool Conscientiousness Scale, and a demographic questionnaire.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE; Rosenberg, 1965) is a 10 item survey which assesses a participant's self-esteem. The RSE has participants rate themselves on a four-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. This survey contains items such as, "I feel I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others" and "At times I think I am no good at all." Scores range from 10-40, with higher scores indicating higher self-esteem. The RSE has been widely used in past research and has good reliability and validity, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients for past research at $\alpha = 0.90$ which indicates strong internal consistency (Geng & Jiang, 2013). The RSE is reliable across diverse populations, as supported by coefficient alphas that were $\alpha = .92$ among Korean Americans (Lee, 2005), $\alpha = .86$ among Asian Indians (Tummala-Narra, Inman, & Ettigi, 2011), and $\alpha = .88$ among Asian Americans, in a sample including Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Indian, Filipino, Taiwanese, Taidam, Japanese, Thai, Hmong, Laotian, and Cambodian individuals (Wei, Yeh, Chao, Carrera, & Su, 2013). Its direct relationship with social connectedness and inverse relationship with depression among Korean Americans further supported the validity of the scale (Lee, 2005).

Family Assessment Device. The Family Assessment Device (FAD; Epstein, Baldwin, & Bishop, 1983) is a 60-item, self-report inventory that measures general family functioning, as well as key areas of family functioning. For the purposes of this study, only the general functioning and roles subscales were used, together accounting for 20 items. The higher the score on each subscale, the more stress the family is experiencing in that area of functioning. The FAD uses a 4-point rating scale (1-4) for each item with responses which range from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree," and examples of items are, "In times of crisis we can turn to each other for support" and "We make sure members meet their family responsibilities." The Family Assessment Device was found to have an internal consistency that ranges using Cronbach's alpha coefficients from $\alpha = 0.71$ to $\alpha = .92$ (Byles, Byrne, Boyle, & Offord, 1988). This survey was developed in North America, but has been used in the United Kingdom (Goodyer, Nicol, Eavis, & Pollinger, 1982) and Hungary (Keitner, Ryan, Miller, Epstein, Bishop, & Norman, 1990), indicating the survey has adequate cross-cultural validity. The FAD is significantly correlated with the corresponding Clinical Rating Scale of the McMaster family assessments (Miller, Epstein, Bishop, & Keitner, 1985) and thus has good construct validity.

Parental Authority Questionnaire – Short Version. The Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ; Alkharusi, Aldhafri, Kazem, Alzubiadi, & Al-Bahrani, 2011) is a short version of the extensively utilized Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) created by Buri (1991) to measure Baumrind's (1971) parenting styles model, including authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive styles. The short version is a 20-item questionnaire which is filled out for each parent to evaluate each of their parenting styles, making up 40 items total. Each parent may have a very different parenting style, so having participants fill out a separate measure for each allows for a more accurate and specific understanding of the parenting styles of

their parents. The participants rate each item on a 5-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Examples of items are "As I was growing up, my father/mother seldom gave me expectations and guidelines for my behavior" or "My father/mother felt that wise parents should teach their children early who is the boss in the family." The higher the score for each subscale, the greater the participant's perception of the respective parent fitting the given parenting style. Buri's (1991) scale had good alpha coefficient ranging between $\alpha = 0.74$ and $\alpha = .87$ (Buri, 1991). Cronbach's alpha was used to compare the internal consistency reliability in each subscale of the short and long versions of the PAQ for each parent. The alpha coefficients for the father were: $\alpha = 0.75$ short version, $\alpha = 0.71$ long-version for the authoritative subscale; $\alpha = 0.72$ short version, $\alpha = 0.67$ long-version for the authoritarian subscale; and $\alpha = 0.65$ short version, $\alpha = 0.59$ long-version for the permissive subscale (Alkharusi, Aldhafri, Kazem, Alzubiadi, & Al-Bahrani, 2011). Having a higher alpha coefficient for each of these subscales indicates that the short version of the PAQ may in fact be a more effective measure of parenting styles than the original, long-version.

International Personality Item Pool Conscientiousness Scale. The International Personality Item Pool (IPIP; Goldberg, 1999) is a non-copyrighted version of NEO-PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992) that measures a person's typical behaviors and emotional reactions to everyday situations. For the purposes of this study, only the 20-item Conscientiousness Scale was used. The participants rate each item on a scale of 1 (very inaccurate) to 5 (very accurate) of how accurately the phrase described them. Examples of items are "finish what I start" and "am always prepared." A low conscientiousness score indicates that the participant is more carefree and disorganized, an average score indicates that the participant is reasonably reliable and organized, and a high score indicates that the participant is reliable and hard-working. The average

coefficient alpha is slightly higher for IPIP scales (α = .80) compared to the NEO-PI-R scales (α = .75) (Goldberg, 1999). The average correlation between the corresponding scales of the NEO-PI-R and the IPIP is r = .73 (Goldberg, 1999).

Demographic questionnaire. The demographic questionnaire was utilized to determine participants' demographic information. The questionnaire inquired about different aspects of the participant's life, including age, gender, race, religious affiliation, and number of siblings. The questionnaire had 10 items in which the participant was supposed to circle the most representative answer or fill in the blank (e.g. "What is your country of origin?").

Procedure

Participants for this study were found in a convenience sample which included students at two small, private, Catholic universities. Caucasian participants were recruited from Introduction to Psychology courses primarily. Hmong participants were primarily recruited through a Hmong-related club within the college via an email that was distributed by the club president. Hmong participants were also be recruited through the International Student Office on campus that sent out an email to all students who have identified as Asian. The survey was also advertised to the rest of the campus population, including Caucasian and Hmong participants, through the college's announcement emails, which are sent to the entire student body.

The survey included an informed consent form, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the Family Assessment Device, the Parental Authority Questionnaire (short version), the International Personality Item Pool Conscientiousness Scale, and a demographic questionnaire. This arrangement represents one version of the survey. Counterbalancing was used by providing two different versions of the survey in which the order of the surveys presented differed. The second version was arranged in the following order: informed consent form, the International

Personality Item Pool Conscientiousness Scale, the Parental Authority Questionnaire (short version), the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the Family Assessment Device, and a demographic questionnaire. Upon completion of the survey, the participant was given the option to submit their contact information in order to enter a drawing for a small prize of $20 to a local coffee shop. Their contact information was kept separate from their survey data. The results of the survey were anonymously sent to the researcher to be collected for statistical analysis.

Results

The first research hypothesis predicted that Caucasian participants would have a higher self-esteem score than Hmong participants. An independent samples t-test was used. Contrary to the research hypothesis, statistical analysis revealed no significant difference in self-esteem between Caucasian and Hmong participants, $t(85) = -.04$, $p = .97$, $d = -.01$. According to these results, Hmong ($M = 30.60$, $SD = 4.39$) and Caucasian individuals ($M = 30.56$, $SD = 4.54$) have nearly the same level of self-esteem, indicating an almost equal amount of self-respect and confidence in themselves. The research hypothesis was not supported.

The second hypothesis predicted Hmong participants would have a higher conscientiousness score than Caucasian participants. An independent samples t-test was conducted to test this hypothesis as well. Statistical analysis revealed a significant difference in conscientiousness between Hmong and Caucasian individuals, $t(82) = 3.63$, $p = .00$, $d = .78$. Contrary to the research hypothesis, Caucasian participants ($M = 81.13$, $SD = 8.99$) were significantly more conscientious than Hmong participants ($M = 72.10$, $SD = 13.60$). Based on the operational definition used in the measure of conscientiousness, Caucasians would then be considered more reliable and organized, whereas Hmong would be considered more carefree,

careless, or disorganized. Alternative explanations are discussed below. Although there was a significant difference between the two groups, the research hypothesis was not supported.

The third hypothesis predicted Hmong participants would have a higher family general functioning stress score than Caucasian participants. An independent samples t-test was conducted. Contrary to the research hypothesis, statistical analysis revealed no significant difference in general functioning stress between Hmong and Caucasian participants, $t(87) = -.04$, $p = .99$, $d = -.01$. Caucasian participants ($M = 30.38$, $SD = 3.16$) had roughly equal levels of general familial stress as Hmong participants ($M = 30.40$, $SD = 2.49$). The results indicate that Hmong have roughly the same amount of general familial stress as Caucasians. The research hypothesis was not supported.

The fourth hypothesis predicted Hmong participants would have a higher familial roles stress score than Caucasian participants. An independent samples t-test was conducted. Statistical analysis revealed a significant difference in familial role stress between Hmong and Caucasian participants, $t(87) = 4.90$, $p = .00$, $d = 1.03$. Contrary to the research hypothesis, Caucasian participants ($M = 18.17$, $SD = 2.10$) had more familial role stress than Hmong participants ($M = 15.95$, $SD = 2.19$). The research hypothesis was not supported despite a significant difference across the two groups.

The fifth hypothesis predicted Hmong participants would perceive their parents to be more authoritarian than Caucasian participants. An independent samples t-test was used. Contrary to the research hypothesis, statistical analysis revealed no significant difference in perceived authoritarian parenting styles between Hmong and Caucasian participants, $t(87) = -.18$, $p = .86$, $d = -.04$. The results indicate that Hmong participants ($M = 41.33$, $SD = 11.06$) perceive

their parents to be no more authoritarian than Caucasian participants (M = 40.94, SD = 9.77). The research hypothesis was not supported.

Exploratory Analyses

To further investigate the results, some exploratory analyses were conducted. Several of these findings were found to be significant. First, using an independent samples t-test, Caucasian parents were perceived as more authoritative than Hmong parents, $t(87) = 5.53$, $p = .00$, $d = 1.16$. Hmong mothers were revealed to be more authoritarian than Caucasian mothers, $t(87) = -2.55$, $p = .01$, $d = -.54$, with no difference between Hmong and Caucasian fathers, $t(87) = 1.54$, $p = .13$, $d = .32$. Hmong mothers were also found to be more permissive than Caucasian mothers, $t(87) = -2.44$, $p = .02$, $d = -.51$, with no difference revealed between Hmong and Caucasian fathers, $t(87) = .90$, $p = .37$, $d = .19$. Both Caucasian mothers, $t(87) = 4.75$, $p = .00$, $d = 1.00$, and fathers, $t(87) = 4.88$, $p = .00$, $d = 1.02$, were found to be more authoritative than Hmong mothers and fathers. These findings indicate that Hmong mothers are perceived as both more authoritarian and permissive than Caucasian mothers, that Caucasian parents are perceived as more authoritative overall, and that Hmong and Caucasian fathers are perceived as roughly equally permissive and authoritarian.

Table 1.
Comparisons between Hmong and Caucasian Participants (C = Caucasian; H = Hmong)

Variables	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*	Cohen's *d*
Self-esteem	C = 30.56; H = 30.60	C = 4.54; H = 4.39	-.04	.97	-.01
Conscientiousness	C = 81.13; H = 72.10	C = 8.99; H= 13.60	3.63	.00	.78
Familial General Functioning Stress	C = 30.38; H = 30.40	C = 3.16; H = 2.49	-.04	.99	-.01
Familial Roles Stress	C = 18.17; H = 15.95	C = 2.10; H = 2.19	4.90	.00	1.03

Authoritarian - Parents	C = 40.94; H = 41.33	C = 9.77; H = 11.06	-.18	.86	-.04
Authoritative - Parents	C = 54.98; H = 43.26	C = 7.80; H = 11.94	5.53	.00	1.16
Authoritarian - Mothers	C = 20.15; H = 22.95	C = 5.01; H = 5.38	-2.55	.01	-.54
Authoritarian - Fathers	C = 20.79; H = 18.38	C = 5.77; H = 8.84	1.54	.13	.32
Permissive - Mothers	C = 13.40; H = 15.26	C = 3.25; H = 4.01	2.44	.02	-.51
Permissive - Fathers	C = 13.66; H = 12.62	C = 3.57; H = 7.01	.90	.37	.19
Authoritative - Mothers	C = 28.23; H = 23.74	C = 4.13; H = 4.80	4.75	.00	1.00
Authoritative - Fathers	C = 26.74; H = 19.52	C = 4.90; H = 8.71	4.88	.00	1.02

Discussion

The current study offers a deeper understanding of Hmong and Caucasian individuals, especially in relation to their families. The first hypothesis, which predicted that Caucasian individuals would have higher self-esteem than Hmong individuals, was not supported. Instead Caucasian and Hmong individuals were found to have no significant difference in self-esteem, indicating nearly equal levels of self-respect, self-confidence, among other associated characteristics. This finding is surprising given the Western focus on independence, praise, and the building up of the self, in contrast to the interdependent self-contrual held by many Eastern cultures, as well as their avoidance of praise and favor towards humility and directive parenting. There are several possible explanations for their similar levels of self-esteem, however.

It is possible that Caucasian individuals, who generally have an independent self-construal, are more distressed and negatively affected by failure due to their need to distinguish themselves from others and stand out as individuals in comparison to interdependently oriented Hmong individuals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This may be especially prevalent in the

competitive college setting from which the sample came. A sensitivity to failure may thus explain why Caucasians had lower self-esteem levels than anticipated in comparison to Hmong individuals. Since the majority of participants were female as well, and females tend to have lower self-esteem and to have a more interdependent self-construal than males (Cross & Madson, 1997; Harter, 1993), it is possible that the self-esteem scores for females across racial-ethnic groups are similar, but that if male participants had been included, the independent minded Caucasian males would raise up the score their racial-ethnic group so that it seems that all Caucasian individuals have higher self-esteem. Male Hmong individuals may have a lower self-esteem than the Caucasian males as well given their interdependent self-construal.

It is also possible that Hmong individuals are becoming acculturated more readily than anticipated. For example, in an effort to embrace Western culture and break away from the Hmong traditions held on tightly by their parents, Hmong children may distance themselves from their Hmong culture or families to claim their own identity as American citizens. This may contribute to a higher level of self-esteem in Hmong individuals than anticipated, since time and acculturation have been found to enhance self-esteem in Hmong individuals (Westermeyer, Neider, & Callies, 1989). Having roughly equal levels of self-esteem may indicate that Hmong individuals are able to effectively overcome obstacles associated with their minority or refugee status to have just as much confidence and self-assurance as their Caucasian peers. This may have changed for the Hmong over time and might stand in contrast to the experiences of their parents when they were college-aged as first generation immigrants and refugees. The change in acculturation and self-esteem may represent a historical effect in the Hmong population.

Caucasian individuals were revealed to be more conscientious than Hmong individuals in the current study. This implication would be that Caucasian individuals work harder, are more

reliable, and are more organized than Hmong individuals, who are perhaps more careless and disorganized. These different levels in conscientiousness may provide an explanation for why one group may work more diligently than another in the work or education settings. This was another surprising finding given that Hmong individuals seem to be expected to contribute more within their family and society than Caucasian individuals who, based on the Western mindset, may see autonomy and individualism as more important, allowing them to be more carefree with their lives. These differing levels of freedom contribute to the idea that Western cultures promote a lifestyle that is more self-serving and that Eastern cultures are more self-sacrificing. However, the results imply that it is the Hmong individuals who are more self-serving.

This may reflect the aforementioned desire of Hmong individuals to gain more autonomy under the control and pressure of their parents to remain true to their family's cultural roots. In their transition towards independence, they may become more carefree and less conscientious than Caucasian individuals who do not need to make such a transition. It is also possible that the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) Conscientiousness Scale did not provide an accurate picture of the conscientiousness of these groups due to the bias of the measure in favor of Western values, discussed further in the limitations section.

Furthermore, it may be that Caucasians simply believe they are more conscientious than they really are, whereas Hmong individuals engage in a more realistic or self-effacing approach. Those from Eastern cultures are more likely to see context and a world of details, a situational explanation for behavior, whereas Caucasian individuals tend to focus on the big picture and miss other details that provide a fuller background, a dispositional explanation for behavior (Krull et al., 1999). In this case, that might mean that Caucasian individuals saw the questions and immediately thought of their school or work environment, in which they are organized and

hardworking. Hmong individuals may have additionally pondered their family environment, their duties as civil citizens, their spiritual obligations, etc. This fuller picture may have included areas where they are very conscientious, and others where they see room for improvement. Hmong individuals may then have given themselves a lower score in these areas, dragging down what might have been higher scores in other areas. In the end, by looking at all aspects of conscientiousness rather than just one or two, Hmong individuals may have given themselves lower scores on conscientiousness overall than Caucasian individuals.

There was no significant difference found for general familial stress between Hmong and Caucasian individuals. The rejected hypothesis was based on the idea that the immigrant or refugee statuses of many Hmong families and concerns associated with such a status, such as language barriers and bicultural identities, would add to the general levels of stress within Hmong families. Additionally, the lack of emphasis on open communication among Eastern cultures was thought to have contributed to higher levels of familial stress. Given that there was no significant difference, however, it may be that stress within families is relative and may be interpreted as more negative than it would be comparatively because it is based on the unique backgrounds of each individual. Within a clinical setting, it may be important to consider that although Caucasian and Hmong individuals may claim they have no more familial stress than the other, their perceptions may not match a more objective reality.

Another explanation might be that the stress within the families of Caucasian families is more fresh in their minds since the majority of these participants were 18 or 19 years old (84.4% of the Caucasian participants), indicating that many were in their first year of college or beginning their second year. Hmong families may experience more familial stress, but they may not be reflecting upon it as much since many of them have been in college for a while and have

spent more time away from their families. It may also be less common for Hmong individuals to speak poorly about their family or indicate that they are feeling stressed to outsiders than for Caucasian individuals, who may feel more comfortable sharing negative information about their families. There is also the possibility that Hmong individuals are truly not as stressed within their families as previously thought or do not see things such as lack of praise to be as stressful as they might be for Caucasian families, who are more accustomed to praise.

On the other hand, Caucasian individuals reported significantly more familial roles stress than Hmong individuals. Again, this may be a matter of Hmong individuals accepting roles stress as an expected norm within their families and are not as stressed about it as Caucasian individuals, who may be more taken aback and upset by it. It may also be that Caucasian individuals are assigned more jobs and responsibilities within the family, whereas Hmong individuals may have just as many if not more, but they do not feel that their family is assigning them these responsibilities. It is more of an expectation they go along with than a task given to them. Furthermore, it is possible that Caucasian individuals truly experience greater role stress within the family due to other members of the family attempting to shirk their duties, whereas members of Hmong families may not need to check in to make sure everyone is doing what they are supposed it – it is, again an expectation that tends to be followed.

Since 66.7% of Caucasian participants had only one or two siblings, the responsibilities in their household may not be as spread out as they are in Hmong families, which tend to have more children. Having less siblings may make it seem unfair to Caucasian children to be given so much work, whereas Hmong children feel less of a burden since they have many more siblings to help distribute the work, even if they end up with the same amount or more work than Caucasian children.

Finally, Hmong parents were perceived as no more authoritarian than Caucasian parents. However, Hmong mothers specifically were perceived as significantly more authoritarian than Caucasian mothers, with no significant difference found between Hmong and Caucasian fathers. This would imply that it is the Hmong mothers specifically who are perhaps stricter, more demanding, and more expectant of obedience than their partners or Caucasian parents. This may be due to the changes in gender roles brought about by immigration to Western society or it could be that Hmong mothers always had this role, with fathers being authority figures in the background and reinforcing the requests and actions of the mother. It may be that the fathers are working more outside of the home and that Hmong mothers are simply more present in the lives and homes of their children, thus making them the ones associated with the main parenting style, even if it is favored by both parents.

It should be noted here that the vast majority of the participants in the study were female, making it possible that females have different relationships with their mothers than males, who may experience a more relaxed parenting style from their mothers. This is especially true since Hmong sons are typically given more freedom within their families and are treated as leaders, giving them more of a voice than their female family members (Moua & Lamborn, 2010; Yang, 1997).

As expected, Caucasian parents were more authoritative than Hmong parents, both in general as well as among both mothers and fathers specifically. The finding that Hmong mothers are also more permissive than Caucasian mothers, however, was intriguing, especially since other Hmong mothers were also perceived as more authoritarian. This indicates a mix of possible parenting approaches for Hmong mothers, perhaps in reaction to their uncertainty or differing

ideas on whether they should encourage their children to embrace their Hmong culture or the desire for their children to fit in in their new country.

Limitations

There were some limitations in the design of this study. The use of a convenience sample limits the external validity of the findings for several reasons. First, the participants were obtained from two Catholic institutions in the United States, meaning their experiences and perspectives may differ from those going to public universities. These institutions are located in a state which has one of the largest Hmong populations in the United States, which has perhaps made their acculturation easier and has made their family life less stressful than it may be for Hmong individuals in others states with fewer resources for Hmong families and less community support. Furthermore, the current study only had six male participants, meaning that their experiences were not well represented in the study.

Additionally, the majority of the Caucasian participants were recruited from an Introduction to Psychology lab, whereas most of the Hmong participants were recruited through a Hmong-related club. Rather than just being different in terms of race-ethnicity, then, there may be confounding variables in terms of the age of participants and their willingness to participate in the survey. Since Introduction courses tend to have younger students just starting college, the experiences and perspectives of the Caucasian participants included in the study may be different from a more general population of Caucasian individuals. The Hmong individuals were at all stages of their undergraduate career, offering a mixture in terms of age and college experience. Since they were part of a club in which they participate voluntarily and had no reason other than being entered into a drawing to incentivize them to participate in the survey, Hmong participants may have been more careful in answering the survey questions than Caucasian participants, who

may have gone through it more carelessly so that they could earn credit in their lab for participating.

There are some limitations in regard to the internal validity as well. The current study was designed as a comparative study using the mean scores for a variety of variables for different ethnic groups. Participants were not assigned to different conditions as they would be in an experiment, nor was there any manipulation of variables in the study. Causal claims cannot be made from the results of the current study. For example, it could not be claimed that being Caucasian leads to greater conscientiousness or that being Hmong female precedes an authoritarian parenting style. There are many alternative explanations for the findings revealed in the current study.

Additional issues of self-report may have been present, especially regarding the perceptions of family stress and parenting styles. A more objective interpretation of these variables among the different families would have been more helpful in determining how Hmong and Caucasian families could be compared. Interviewing or observing the parents or families directly, for example, might have provided a more accurate picture of their interactions based on one objective definition of family stress or the parenting styles than the differing interpretations of the items held by the participants. Counterbalancing was attempted, but not successfully in that the second version of the survey was only completed by a few participants. An order effect, therefore, remains a possible factor affecting the results of the study. The total survey was rather long (150 items) and caused attrition in some participants, as well as possible faltering in attention as the survey went on. This raises a concern for the validity of the later measures, especially the PAQ for the second parent and the IPIP Conscientiousness Scale measures. There may also have been an issue with social desirability with the participants answering questions in

a way that would put their culture in a positive light rather than answering in an honest, unbiased manner.

As mentioned in the discussion section, the measures used for the various variables tested may have been biased in favor of Western societies. For example, the IPIP Conscientiousness scale may have more accurately measured conscientiousness in the sense of accomplishing tasks promptly and meeting deadlines, as valued in Western societies, whereas conscientiousness in the sense of taking care of the family before all other obligations, including those associated with work or school, is not taken into account. Thus, Caucasian individuals were found to be more conscientious in the current study, but if another scale had been used featuring more Eastern oriented values, Hmong individuals may have been found to have higher levels of conscientiousness.

For example, a Current Assistance (Fuligni, 2001) questionnaire was created to measure how often individuals are expected to contribute to the family and spend time with them among populations with Asian, Latin American, and European ethnic backgrounds. Although not perfect, this might offer a better idea of how areas of responsibility differ between Hmong and Caucasian individuals. Hmong families tend to focus on the values of respecting one's elders and carrying out family responsibilities (Supple & Cavanaugh, 2013). Caucasians, having an independent self-contsrual, are more willing and able to focus on their individual responsibilities and put those over the needs of their families. Furthermore, it is possible that due to the self-serving bias held by Caucasians, they may have rated themselves as more conscientious and hardworking than they really are, whereas Hmong individuals may have given a more realistic or self-effacing self-report.

Hmong individuals' experiences are also different as immigrants and refugees. The Comprehensive Filial Responsibility Inventory (CFRI; Kosner et al., 2014) has been used with Israeli immigrant youth to measure family roles such as being the language and cultural broker or the self-caretaker and counselor. This may be a valuable measure in future studies to investigate roles specific to Hmong immigrant youth as well, in conjunction with their sense of responsibility towards their family in comparison to their Caucasian peers.

Future Directions

Future studies should look at the bicultural experiences of Hmong individuals and navigate their identities in relation to their family culture and culture in which they now live. The differences in parenting styles between Hmong mothers and fathers should be studied as well, investigating the reasons behind those differences and how those differences play out in the family system. It would also be worthwhile to study the possible differences in perception of parent's parenting style between female and male children, and to obtain more information on how males' experiences differ in Hmong families in relation to their self-esteem, conscientiousness, and perceived familial stress. The same could be done across first generation Hmong individuals and their second generation children or third generation grandchildren. Finally, these groups should be compared on specific types of conscientiousness using different measures rather than relying upon just one. It may be helpful to provide different self-esteem measures to address the different approaches to self-esteem held by those with an independent or interdependent self-construal (e.g., self-expression and validation vs. self-restraint and harmony) (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Conclusion

As the United States continues to serve as a major center of multiculturalism for immigrants and refugees, it is important to continue researching this topic and others like it. There is a lack of research on Hmong individuals in the literature especially, so pushing forward in this line of study will provide insight into their perspectives and experiences for their fellow United States citizens and for the Hmong themselves, especially in the context of their families. Already there may be a historical difference seen here between first generation Hmong and second or third generation Hmong individuals. The current research can serve as another step towards understanding all those that live in our nation and how to best serve them.

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Survey

I am at least 18 years of age. ____ Yes ____ No

I have read the informed consent and agree to participate. ____ (check box)

Do you identify as Hmong, Hmong American, Caucasian American, Chinese, or Chinese American?

_____ Yes _____ No

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

   Strongly Agree **Agree** **Disagree** **Strongly Disagree**

2. At times I think I am no good at all.

   Strongly Agree **Agree** **Disagree** **Strongly Disagree**

3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

   Strongly Agree **Agree** **Disagree** **Strongly Disagree**

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

   Strongly Agree **Agree** **Disagree** **Strongly Disagree**

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

   Strongly Agree **Agree** **Disagree** **Strongly Disagree**

6. I certainly feel useless at times.

   Strongly Agree **Agree** **Disagree** **Strongly Disagree**

7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

   Strongly Agree **Agree** **Disagree** **Strongly Disagree**

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Strongly Agree **Agree** **Disagree** **Strongly Disagree**

9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Strongly Agree **Agree** **Disagree** **Strongly Disagree**

10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Strongly Agree **Agree** **Disagree** **Strongly Disagree**

Family Assessment Device

This assessment contains a number of statements about families. Read each statement carefully, and decide how well it describes your own family. You should answer according to how you see your family.

1. Planning family activities is difficult because we misunderstand each other.

____SA ____ A ____ D _____SD _____

2. When you ask someone to do something, you have to check that they did it.

____SA ____ A ____ D _____SD _____

3. In times of crisis we can turn to each other for support.

____SA ____ A ____ D _____SD _____

4. We make sure members meet their family responsibilities.

____SA ____ A ____ D _____SD _____

5. We cannot talk to each other about the sadness we feel.

____SA ____ A ____ D _____SD _____

6. Family tasks don't get spread around enough.

____SA ____ A ____ D _____SD _____

7. Individuals are accepted for what they are.

____SA ____ A ____ D _____SD _____

8. We avoid discussing our fears and concerns.

____SA ____ A ____ D _____SD _____

9. We have trouble meeting our financial obligations.

____SA ____ A ____ D _____SD _____

10. We can express feelings to each other.

____SA ____ A ____ D _____SD _____

11. There are lots of bad feelings in the family.

____SA ____ A ____ D _____SD _____

12. There is little time to explore personal interests.

____SA ____ A ____ D _____SD _____

13. We feel accepted for what we are.

____SA ____ A ____ D _____SD _____

14. We discuss who are responsible for household jobs.

____SA ____ A ____ D _____SD _____

15. Making decisions is a problem for our family.

____SA ____ A ____ D _____SD _____

16. If people are asked to do something, they need reminding.

____SA ____ A ____ D _____SD _____

17. We are able to make decisions about how to solve problems.

____SA ____ A ____ D _____SD _____

18. We don't get along well together.

____SA ____ A ____ D _____SD _____

19. We are generally dissatisfied with the family duties assigned to us.

____SA ____ A ____ D _____SD _____

20. We confide in each other.

____SA ____ A ____ D _____SD _____

Short Version PAQ (given twice, one for each parent)

Parent 1 - Choose one parent/guardian to focus on when answering the following questions.

Parent 2 - Choose the other parent/guardian to focus on when answering the following questions.

If you do not have another parent/guardian, please skip this section.

1. Once family policy had been established, my father/mother discussed the reasoning behind the policy with the children.

   Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral

   Agree Strongly Agree

2. My father/mother directed the activities and decisions of the children through reasoning and discipline.

   Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral

   Agree Strongly Agree

3. As the children in my family were growing up, my father/mother consistently gave us direction and guidance in rational and objective ways.

   Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral

   Agree Strongly Agree

4. My father/mother had clear standards of behavior for the children in our home, but he/she was willing to adjust those standards to the needs of each of the individual children in the family.

   Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral

   Agree Strongly Agree

5. My father/mother gave me direction for my behavior and activities as I was growing up and he/she expected me to follow his/her direction, but he/she was always willing to listen to my concerns and to discuss that direction with me.

   Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral**

   Agree **Strongly Agree**

6. As I was growing up, my father/mother gave me clear direction for my behaviors and activities, but he/she was also understanding when I disagreed with him/her.

   Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral**

   Agree **Strongly Agree**

7. As I was growing up, if my father/mother made a decision in the family that hurt me, he/she was willing to discuss that decision with me and to admit it if he/she had made a mistake.

   Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral**

   Agree **Strongly Agree**

8. Even if his/her children didn't agree with him/her, my father/mother felt that it was for our own good if we were forced to conform to what he/she thought was right.

   Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral**

   Agree **Strongly Agree**

9. Whenever my father/mother told me to do something as I was growing up, he/she expected me to do it immediately without asking any questions.

   Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral**

   Agree **Strongly Agree**

10. My father/mother has always felt that more force should be used by parents in order to get their children to behave the way they are supposed to.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral**

Agree **Strongly Agree**

11. My father/mother felt that wise parents should teach their children early who is the boss in the family.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral**

Agree **Strongly Agree**

12. As I was growing up, my father/mother would get very upset if I tried to disagree with him/her.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral**

Agree **Strongly Agree**

13. As I was growing up, my father/mother let me know what behavior he/she expected of me, and if I didn't meet those expectations, he/she punished me.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral**

Agree **Strongly Agree**

14. My father/mother has always felt that most problems in society would be solved if parents strictly and forcibly dealt with their children when they don't do what they are supposed to.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral**

Agree **Strongly Agree**

15. My father/mother has always felt that children need to be free to make up their own minds and to do what they want to do, even if this does not agree with what their parents might want.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral**

Agree **Strongly Agree**

16. As I was growing up, my father/mother did not feel that I needed to obey rules and regulations of behavior simply because someone in authority has established them.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral**

Agree **Strongly Agree**

17. As I was growing up, my father/mother seldom gave me expectations and guidelines for my behavior.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral**

Agree **Strongly Agree**

18. My father/mother feels that most problems in society would be solved if parents did not restrict their children's activities, decisions, and desires.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral**

Agree **Strongly Agree**

19. My father/mother did not view herself as responsible for directing and guiding my behavior as I was growing up.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral**

Agree **Strongly Agree**

20. My father/mother did not direct the behaviors, activities, and desires of the children in the family.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral**

Agree **Strongly Agree**

Please indicate your relationship to Parent 1 (ex. mother, father): _____

Please indicate your relationship to Parent 2 (ex. mother, father): _____

IPIP Conscientiousness Scale

Below is a list of statements dealing with your perception of your personality. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.

1. **Am always prepared.**

   Very Inaccurate Moderately Inaccurate Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate

   Moderately Accurate Very Accurate

2. **Pay attention to details.**

   Very Inaccurate Moderately Inaccurate Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate

   Moderately Accurate Very Accurate

3. **Get chores done right away.**

   Very Inaccurate Moderately Inaccurate Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate

   Moderately Accurate Very Accurate

4. **Carry out my plans.**

   Very Inaccurate Moderately Inaccurate Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate

   Moderately Accurate Very Accurate

5. **Make plans and stick to them.**

   Very Inaccurate Moderately Inaccurate Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate

   Moderately Accurate Very Accurate

6. **Complete tasks successfully.**

   Very Inaccurate Moderately Inaccurate Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate

   Moderately Accurate Very Accurate

7. **Do things according to a plan.**

   Very Inaccurate Moderately Inaccurate Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate

Moderately Accurate Very Accurate

8. **Am exacting in my work.**

Very Inaccurate Moderately Inaccurate Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate

Moderately Accurate Very Accurate

9. **Finish what I start.**

Very Inaccurate Moderately Inaccurate Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate

Moderately Accurate Very Accurate

10. **Follow through with my plans.**

Very Inaccurate Moderately Inaccurate Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate

Moderately Accurate Very Accurate

11. **Waste my time.**

Very Inaccurate Moderately Inaccurate Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate

Moderately Accurate Very Accurate

12. **Find it difficult to get down to work.**

Very Inaccurate Moderately Inaccurate Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate

Moderately Accurate Very Accurate

13. **Do just enough work to get by.**

Very Inaccurate Moderately Inaccurate Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate

Moderately Accurate Very Accurate

14. **Don’t see things through.**

Very Inaccurate Moderately Inaccurate Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate

Moderately Accurate Very Accurate

15. **Shirk my duties.**

Very Inaccurate Moderately Inaccurate Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate

Moderately Accurate Very Accurate

16. **Mess things up.**

Very Inaccurate Moderately Inaccurate Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate

Moderately Accurate Very Accurate

17. **Leave things unfinished.**

Very Inaccurate Moderately Inaccurate Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate

Moderately Accurate Very Accurate

18. **Don’t put my mind on the task at hand.**

Very Inaccurate Moderately Inaccurate Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate

Moderately Accurate Very Accurate

19. **Make a mess of things.**

Very Inaccurate Moderately Inaccurate Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate

Moderately Accurate Very Accurate

20. **Need a push to get started.**

Very Inaccurate Moderately Inaccurate Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate

Moderately Accurate Very Accurate

Demographic Questionnaire

1. **Age** _____

2. **Race**

Hmong Hmong American Caucasian American

Chinese Chinese American

3. **Gender**

Male Female Transgender

4. **What is your country of origin?**

_____

5. **What is your socioeconomic status?**

Very low income Low income Low middle income

Middle income High middle income High income

6. **Approximate time of parent(s)/guardian(s) in the U.S.:** _____

7. **Were you adopted?**

Yes No

8. **If you answered "yes" to question 7, describe the ethnicity of your adoptive family:**

Hmong Hmong American Caucasian American

Chinese Chinese American Other _____

9. **What is your religion?**

Catholic Lutheran Baptist Other Christian denomination

Buddhist Muslim Other religion not listed No religious affiliation

10**. How many siblings do you have?**

_____

PRIA # _____
If you are participating through PRIA, please leave your PRIA number here to receive credit for your participation. This information will be kept separate from the rest of the survey.

You have the OPTION to enter a drawing for a $20 gift card to the Local Blend. If you would like to be entered in the drawing, please leave your CSB/SJU email address below. This information will be kept separate from the rest of the survey.
Contact Information _____